

**REMARKS**

The Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough examination of the subject application and request reconsideration of the subject application based on the following remarks.

Claim 1, 15, and 17 have been amended. No new matter has been introduced as a result of the amendments to the claims. Support for the amendments may be found throughout the specification. No new matter has been introduced into the application.

Claims 1, 15 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

The language "half-esterified intermediates," in claim 1 is fully supported by the specification. See, for example, page 8, lines 5 to 7 which specifies that a first esterification step provides intermediates in which half of the carboxylic acid groups have been esterified, e.g., a half-esterified intermediate. Although Applicants believe that the instant language is clear and definite, they are amenable to proposals by the Examiner for alternate language.

One skilled in the art would readily recognize a "packing-type" distillation apparatus as referring to a distillation column which is packed with a high surface area material suitable for the separation of materials with different boiling points. However, in the interest of expediting prosecution, the language "packing-type" has been amended to read --packed distillation apparatus-- in claims 15 and 17.

Thus, claims 1, 15, and 17 are fully compliant with 35 U.S.C. §112 including the requirements of §112, second paragraph.

The Examiner has objected to claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, because the specification is allegedly not enabling for all nitro compounds.

Although Applicants disagree, the language referring to the "decomposing remaining nitric acid and nitrocompounds" has been replaced with language specifying the temperature and pressure ranges at which the concentration process is carried out.

Thus, claim 1 is fully compliant with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112 including the requirements of §112, first paragraph.

Thus, claim 1 is fully compliant with 35 U.S.C. §112 including the requirements of §112, first paragraph.

It is respectfully submitted that the subject application is in condition for allowance. Applicants request reconsideration of the claims and withdrawal of the rejections.

Applicants believe that additional fees are not required for consideration of the within Response. However, if for any reason a fee is required, a fee paid is inadequate or credit is owed for any excess fee paid, you are hereby authorized and requested to charge Deposit Account No. **04-1105**.

Respectfully submitted,

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